

The Gurnet - Part IV

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(Written in 1935)

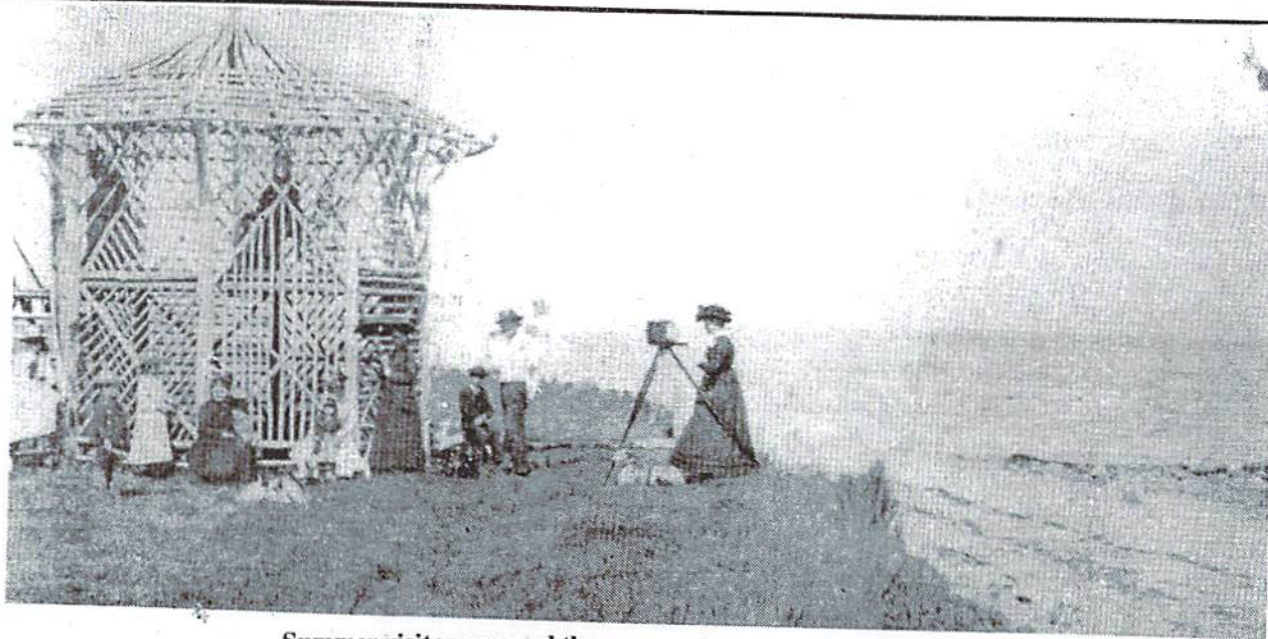
1886. The second season opened quite auspiciously on Fast Day, April 8, with Elville and Harold Gray and Walter Bradshaw heading the list. On June 24 Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dennie and son, Harry, a singer and vocal teacher, registered. Mr. Dennie was city treasurer of Boston, his wife was an attractive woman and the son a fine singer who charmed all with his clever mimicry and joking. Two friends of Arthur's came down on the 4th of July, David McGaw of Augusta, Georgia and Ulysses Grant Lee of Boston.

This proved to be a lively summer due to the presence of so many young people. The young men found Captain Holmes' daughters most attractive and charming, so much activity centered around the Holmes' domicile which they called "Naugatuck." There was a path, ambitiously called "The Boulevard" where the young people strolled on moonlit nights. Then too, Lover's Rock was the rendezvous of the more romantic, as it has been for many a season up to the present day. May the Rock always have its happy lovers!

There was an alcove in front of the Gurnet Inn's kitchen known as the "Smoker's Retreat" where the sportsmen hung their birds and swapped yarns. A sign, "No smoking," was painted which, of course, was pointedly ignored.

Emma Boardman had as her guest late in August, Miss Florence Hall of Wakefield. Miss Hall in her turn became a Gurnet lover and as Mrs. William Jacobs, is still a prominent summer resident.

C. Botsford of Boston was a guest in July. He was one of those fellows who just naturally becomes the butt of all jokes. On one occasion, "Uly" Lee, possessor of the longest legs of the men present, placed a live turkey in poor Botsford's room. One may imagine Mr. Botsford's chagrin upon retiring to encounter this unusual roommate. He never succeeded in discovering the perpetrator of this deed but he probably had his suspicions. Uly Lee was most popular in those days. He was an excellent piano player of the vaudeville variety. His playing and Harry Dennie's charming ballad singing proved fine entertainment. Florence Hall said that Harry's singing on the moonlit veranda of the Inn would melt a heart of stone.



Summer visitors around the summer house at the Gurnet.

Arthur Summers of Boston was initiated by being led blindfolded across the pasture with its holes and pitfalls on a dark night. He was one of the many who found "Naugatuck" a most fascinating spot.

One cold moonlit night when the clear sky was bespangled with stars and the moonlit waters of the bay with the myriad lights of Plymouth in the distance presenting a scene of unearthly beauty, Mrs. Boardman sat on the veranda, resting from the cares of the day.

She began ruminating over the quiet beauty and loneliness of the place, of the gay young people now departed, their deserted haunts, the many pranks and larks of the summer now passed, and a mood of tender sentiment overpowered her. Lines of poetry came to her thought. She arose, went into the house and wrote a most beautiful poem entitled "Autumn at the Gurnet, 1886" -- one of the most poetic descriptions of the place ever penned. She was a woman of pronounced literary gifts and poetic talent.

Here is her poem:

*Oh! fair and lovely Gurnet
Beauteous queen of the bay
Blue are the skies above thee
Round thee the zephyrs play.*

*Still dance the waves and sparkle
Around thy sea-beat shore
The billows toss and tumble
The rock-heaps o'er and o'er.*

*But no one culls their treasures
Or gathers of thy stones.
Deep buried lie thy jewels,
Unsought for and unknown.*

*No more we watch the boatman,
As he glides along the shore,
For lover, friend or husband
To us return no more.*

*No more the little sand-peep
Waits for the coming wave,
Nor flies he now in terror
His little life to save.*

*The coots swing low and nearer,
The sea gulls scream and fly,
Or bathe in the sparkling water;
No hunter in ambush by.*

*While teal and quail and plover
Their happy way pursue;
No roving bullet alarms them,
Nor hunter with aim so true.*

*The Morgue awaits new victims;
Now closed is Smoker's Retreat,
Which oft and long has echoed
To the sound of sportsman's feet*

*Where the voice of mirth and story
Arose with the smoke from the clay,
As each to another recounted
The wond'rous deeds of the day.*

*When shadows begin to darken
And the curtains of night to fall,
The embers are cold on the hearth-stone,
And silence reigns at the hall.*

*No maid and lover is treading
The path to Naugatuck.
Green Hill so fair is deserted;
No tenants has Lovers' Rock.*

*The silver moonlight glitters
On the waters of the bay,
But walkers on the Boulevard
Have vanished all away.*

*The midnight raids are ended;
Sleeps the turkey on peaceful wing.
No thought of a higher station
Do the shades of evening bring.*

*Oh! still and quiet Gurnet,
Far from the noise and strife
Of the city's restless tumult,
And its restless, hurried life.*

*Fond and true are thy lovers,
Who sing thy wondrous praise,
And wait for summer's coming,
With its merry, halcyon days.*

*Soon will the hoary winter
Stretch forth his icy hand,
And drape the hills with his mantle,
And wither the smiling land.*

*Round thee in angry tempest
Shall the waves of ocean roar,
And fierce wild winds upon thee
Their rage and fury pour.*

*Far out on the surging billows
Shall shine thy beacon lights
And faithful surfmen, watching
All through the dreary nights.*

*Oh! stranded sailor, fear not
That the sea shall overwhelm.
Quick eyes shall see thy danger;
The Captain's at the helm.*

*Their aid will surely reach you;
For a brave and hearty crew
Shall man the Gurnet life-boat,
With Holmes, the tried and true.*

--Ellen Boardman
Autumn, 1886

In October 1886 Mr. Boardman brought down a most noted guest from Boston -- Dan Maguinness -- an actor in the old Boston Museum stock company. He was a great comedian and signed the register as Count Dan Maguinness. On Nov. 11, 1886, Thomas Hennigan of Boston first recorded his name. He became the head farmer and remained at the Gurnet over a decade. More of him anon!

1887. Mr. Elville Gray once more heads our list. For the 4th of July, 8 couples came down on the "Stamford" from Boston. They took the train from Plymouth to Marshfield where Tom Hennigan met them with the ox cart. The young men wore tall gray felt hats and linen dusters with skull and crossbones on the back. Among the group was Arthur Boardman, his fiancée, Maude Upham of Boston, and Uly Lee.

Mr. Charles Lovett of Marshfield was an interesting guest and an authority on geology and astronomy. He was the luckless recipient of a plate of clam chowder on his white pants, spilled by the fair Emma.

Uly Lee seems to have been going and coming much of the time. He used to entertain the passengers on the "Stamford" with his impromptu piano playing. Old photographs show him to be a pleasant looking slender young man in a derby hat.

El Gray seems to have been a confirmed Gurnet fan from the very first. He often developed a sudden backache or headache on Monday when it came time for the return to the city. He was a fine looking, well proportioned young man, rather a Beau Brummel. He caused many a feminine heart to flutter and even today many an eye brightens upon the approach of this elusive bachelor.

Harry Dennie as usual charmed all with his songs. Mrs. Cotton of Chelsea would always, in the course of the evening's serenade on the veranda, exclaim, "Now Harrie -- sing my favorite (pronounced long 'i'), 'Pretty Primrose.'"

1888. As usual the Dennies arrived early for the season and of course the Gray family. The Barnes and Morton families from Plymouth were newcomers, also Fred Hubbard, a well-known Newton druggist, and his wife. Dr. Stephens of

Philadelphia, an authority on arrowheads, found many specimens, presumably relics of the Patuxet Indians of Thorwald's day and the early Pilgrim era.

On July 22, Maude Upham came again. This summer introduced her relatives, the family of Frank Murdock of Boston, to the Gurnet. The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Murdock and 3 daughters, Alice, Mary and Ella. Alice was a public reader and the little girl, Ella, gifted in dramatic work. Harry Dennie blacked her up and led her from the rocks over the steep bluff of the headland, declaring he had found her on the beach. Ella acted her part with great aplomb and the hoax was highly successful.

Mr. William Upham, brother of Maude Upham, came down Aug. 4, accompanied by his friends, William Claus, James Bolan and Frank Myrick. Mr. Upham, an artist, has painted many excellent pictures of the Gurnet and his attractive summer home stands on the ocean bluff near the old Gurnet House. Mrs. Boardman's line in her poem may well apply to him, where she wrote, "Fond and true are thy lovers."

A diverting event of this summer was the digging of a new well. The old well in front of the farmhouse was thought to be unhealthy owing to the proximity of the barn. Arthur, El Gray and others decided to dig a new well nearer the house. Mr. Boardman was highly skeptical, but they persisted and finally struck water. This well has never run dry and still produces clear, cold water. The government well at the fort, 65 ft. deep, also produces excellent water. An animal fell into this well once, which made it unpopular until it was drained and cleaned.

Another more or less amusing incident occurred when Fayette Boardman painted the Murdock's pug dog red.

Mrs. Pranker and Martha Whitehead, relatives of Mrs. Boardman, were also guests.

Outstanding events in 1888 included plays and tableaux given in the pavilion by a resident stock company consisting of Harry Dennie, Agnes Barnes, Clarence Pelton, Emma Boardman, Alice Murdock, James Bolen, Frank Myrick and others. It is said that a love affair existed between Nellie Abbott and Clarence Pelton which ended sadly for the former. The vivacious Sue Thomas of Plymouth was a welcome addition to this lively group of young people.

So far we have not alluded to the transportation of this early period. The most direct way was to take a train for Marshfield at the Old Colony Station, Kneeland and South streets, Boston. Mr. Boardman's carriages drove 9 miles up the long beach to the station. Occasionally Tom Hennigan, with the yoke of oxen "Star" and "Bright" performed this service. It was not a rapid means of transportation, but the ride was pleasant, through the Marshfield countryside, past the former home of Daniel Web-

ster, the home of Adelaide Phillips, the opera singer, and the old Winslow House. After crossing Cut River (which makes Duxbury Beach and the Gurnet an island), Duxbury Beach was reached just below Green Harbor, near the spot where the French Atlantic Cable comes in.

The railroad station at Green Harbor was nearer, but as it was only a flag station few Gurnet people used it. The Old Colony Railroad operated 3 trains

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each way, daily, between Boston and Marshfield, and 4 or 5 between Boston and Plymouth, via Abington, on the main line. On Sunday there were 6 trains each way to Marshfield.

1889. The scrawling boyish signature of Arthur Payne started the register on March 30, 1889. The Lovetts of Marshfield again sailed down in their little boat, Maude and William Upham returned for their vacations, and Clarence Pelton, who aroused Emma Boardman's intense admiration, also returned. Photographs of these summers at the Gurnet in the 80s are still in existence showing several people who are mentioned here in the devastating costumes of the day.

1890. Maude and William Upham opened the season by their presence over the 4th of July. Lindsey Swift of the Boston Public Library, who registered Aug. 8, was a distinguished visitor that season. We do not find the Dennies' name in the register so much, as they did not come after Mr. Dennie's death, but the Grays were still regular visitors. Clara Gray once told the author of a gorgeous sunset seen by Mrs. Dennie, then a widow, which completely overwhelmed her. She fancied that in the glory of that sunset she beheld the land where her departed husband awaited her. Mr. Dennie passed away at the Gurnet, a spot he greatly loved. An aunt of Mr. Boardman, Mrs. Lydia Boardman of Bridgewater, N.H., also passed away there in the Pelton cottage.

On Aug. 19 the place was enlivened by a yachting party, becalmed and driven ashore. Another signature that year was Fred Root of Greenfield and one wonders if it was the Frederick Root who was the composer of sacred music and who set several of Mary Baker Eddy's poems to music.